

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /058 W
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R 011518Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9917
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 STOCKHOLM 0895

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SW
SUBJECT: SUDDEN SPLIT IN SWEDISH COMMUNIST PARTY CATCHES
LEADERSHIP BY SURPRISE

REF: STOCKHOLM 0854 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN A SURPRISE
MOVE THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 28, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS,
THE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES OF THE SWEDISH COMMUNIST
PARTY (VPK) IN MALMO, GOTEBORG, MALARDALEN AND
NORBOTTEN DECIDED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE VPK AND CREATE A
SEPARATE ORGANIZATION, TO BE CALLED THE COMMUNIST WORKERS'
PARTY (ARBETARPARTIET KOMMUNISTERNA). THE SUDDEN MOVE
CAUGHT THE VPK AND CHAIRMAN LARS WERNER BY SURPRISE, AND
WERNER ASSAILED THE DEFECTION AS "AN ATTEMPTED COUP AND A
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TREMENDOUS CRIME." A MAJOR FORMAL SPLIT COULD PREVENT THE
VPK FROM RETURNING TO THE RIKSDAG IN THE 1979 ELECTIONS.
END SUMMARY.

2. THIS LATEST STEP, THE MOST DRASTIC THUS FAR IN THE
LONG FEUD WITHIN THE VPK BETWEEN THE LEADERSHIP AND THE
DISSIDENT PRO-MOSCOW FACTION, WAS REPORTEDLY LED BY

GOTEBORG DISTRICT CHAIRMAN ROLF HAGEL, WHO RECENTLY HAD SHARPLY CRITICIZED WERNER FROM WITHIN THE PARTY EXECUTIVE BOARD (REFTEL). ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, HAGEL IS JOINED BY NORBOTEN DISTRICT CHAIRMAN AND RIKSDAG MEMBER ALF LOWENBORG, LONG A VOCAL CRITIC OF WERNER, AND MALMO CHAIRMAN CAI ADAMSSON, AS THE MAJOR PROONENTS OF THE WELL-COORDINATED WITHDRAWAL.

3. WERNER HAS PROMISED AN IMMEDIATE "COUNTERATTACK," VOWING NOT TO LET A "HANDFUL OF FACTIONISTS" LEAD ENTIRE ORGANIZATIONS OUT OF THE PARTY. WERNER WAS NOT ABLE TO TELL REPORTERS HOW MANY PEOPLE MIGHT ULTIMATELY BE INVOLVED, BUT HE ADMITTED THAT SUCH ACTIONS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO "DECIMATE THE PARTY." WERNER PLEDGED THAT THE PARTY LINE DECIDED AT THE 1975 CONGRESS WILL PREVAIL AND THAT "IMMEDIATE MEASURES" WILL BE TAKEN TO REESTABLISH THE DISRUPTED ORGANIZATIONS.

4. THE 1975 CONGRESS WHICH ELECTED WERNER ALSO DECIDED THAT THE PARTY SHOULD FREE ITSELF FROM MOSCOW AND PURSUE AN INDEPENDENT LINE. ONLY TWO DAYS AFTER THIS WEEK'S DISSIDENT WITHDRAWAL, LOWENBORG REITERATED, IN A MAJOR ARTICLE ATTACKING WERNER, THAT OPPOSITION TO THE WERNER LINE IS NOT ISOLATED IN THE NORTH BUT EXISTS IN ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. "THE QUESTION IS," LOWENBORG WROTE, "WHETHER THE VPK SHOULD BE A MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY OR A LEFT-WING POLITICAL HASH; SHOULD THE VPK DEMONSTRATE SOLIDARITY WITH SOCIALIST COUNTRIES OR SHOULD IT START CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OTHER SOCIALIST STATES," LOWENBORG WARNED THAT IF THE "PERSECUTION" OF DISSENTING OPINION WITHIN THE PARTY DID NOT CEASE, WERNER WOULD BE THE CAUSE OF THE PARTY'S DIVISION. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: EVENTS HAVE AT LEAST PARTIALLY OVERTAKEN LOWENBORG'S PLEA FOR A RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT. DETAILS OF THE SPLIT ARE STILL INCOMPLETE, AND WHETHER IT WILL TAKE HOLD WITH WIDE SUPPORT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT WITHIN INDIVIDUAL DISTRICTS FOR THE ACTIONS OF THE DISTRICT BOARDS IS UNKNOWN. HAGEL AND HIS SUPPORTERS IN GOTEBORG,

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FOR INSTANCE, WERE REPORTEDLY IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR PLACES ON THE DISTRICT BOARD WHEN THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING IS HELD ON MARCH 19, AND THERE APPEARS TO BE A GOOD CHANCE THAT MOST OF THE LOCAL MEMBERSHIP WILL REPUDIATE HAGEL'S COURSE OF ACTION. A SIMILAR CAVEAT PERTAINS TO MALMO; VPK RIKSDAGSMAN JORN SVENSSON POINTS OUT THAT THE MALMO BOARD DECISION COMES BUT FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING, AND CLAIMS THAT A PROPOSAL FOR WITHDRAWAL WOULD HAVE BEEN DEFEATED HAD THE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE BOARD POSSESSED THE COURAGE TO STAND UP AND FIGHT. AND THOUGH NORBOTEN HAS LONG BEEN THE CENTER OF FOMENT, THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT THERE FOR A FORMAL DIVISION IS NOT YET EVIDENT.

6. IF THE DISSIDENTS HOLD TO THEIR COURSE AND SUCCEED IN TAKING A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE MEMBERSHIP,
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PARTICULARLY FROM THE CRUCIAL GOTEBORG AND NORBOTEN AREAS, WITH THEM, THE VPK PROPER WILL BE SORELTY INJURED; SOME OBSERVERS SAY IT MAY LOSE BETWEEN 10-30 PERCENT OF ITS MEMBERS. THE VPK'S ENTIRE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN SWEDEN HAS HINGED ON ITS ABILITY TO ATTAIN THE FOUR

PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL VOTE REQUIRED FOR REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT, AND WITH SUPPORT GENERALLY HOVERING AROUND 4.5 PERCENT, THERE IS NOT MUCH ROOM FOR MANEUVER. SHOULD THE RIFT DEEPEN AND SOLIDIFY, BOTH WERNER AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, WHO RELIED ON VPK SUPPORT IN THE RIKSDAG IN THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, WILL HAVE TO SCRAMBLE FOR NEW SUPPORTERS. SOME OBSERVERS FEEL THAT, AS THE VPK BECOMES MORE UNRELIABLE, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WILL LOOK INCREASINGLY AT THE POSSIBILITY OF PICKING UP SUPPORT FROM THE LIBERAL PARTY, AT LEAST SOME ELEMENTS OF WHICH ARE BECOMING RESTLESS WITH THE NON-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT. A SEVERE SPLIT IN THE VPK, RESULTING IN INABILITY TO REMAIN IN THE RIKSDAG AND THUS LEND ITS SUPPORT TO THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, IS GENERALLY SEEN AS ENHANCING THE PROSPECTS OF CONTINUED NON-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT IN 1979.

SMITH

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